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## **Canon and archive in messages from Oslo Cathedral Square in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011**

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*Abstract: In this article we ask if central values which people were in dialogue with in the memorial messages from Oslo Cathedral Square in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011, may be seen as a part of Norwegian cultural memory, and if so, how. We answer this question in the affirmative, by elaborating on presentations of the Norwegian flag as a symbol of the values unity and solidarity, and on presentations of love and roses as weapons promoting the values love, humanity and calmness. In our discussion we have drawn on theory of cultural memory and suggested that the use of the Norwegian flag in the messages may be understood in the frame of Assmann's term "canon", representing the active part of cultural remembrance, and that the message from the use of roses and hearts may be understood in the frame of the term "archive", representing the passive part of remembrance.*

**KEYWORDS:** MEMORIAL MESSAGES, CRITICAL EVENT, VALUES, CULTURAL MEMORY, THE NORWEGIAN FLAG, LOVE AND ROSES AS WEAPONS

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## Introduction

On July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 Anders Behring Breivik bombed the Government buildings in central Oslo. Eight people were killed and many wounded. He also shot and killed 69 youths and wounded many more on the small island of Utøya in Hole municipality where the Labour Party's youth were having their summer camp.

Prime Minister Stoltenberg characterised this event as the worst atrocity Norway has seen since the Second World War (Stoltenberg, 2011a). And in a panel discussion at the conference "Den offentlige sorgen etter 22.juli" (The public grief in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup>) at Litteraturhuset in Oslo on June 12<sup>th</sup> 2012, State Secretary Hans Kristian Amundsen emphasised that Stoltenberg and his staff were starting the efforts of formulating an overriding value message to the Norwegian nation immediately after this critical event (my notes; see also Stormark, 2011). This focus on values became evident even in the first speeches from Stoltenberg and the royal family in the days that followed: the values of openness and democracy, empathy, solidarity and love constituted the hub in these speeches.

Ordinary people also sent their value messages. These messages were, inter alia, expressed at memorial sites which were spontaneously established across the country. Here flowers, candles, teddy bears, greetings in the form of verbal texts and drawings etc. were placed. One of the most prominent of these memorial places was Oslo Cathedral Square:



FIG. 1

*(Picture retrieved from Graven, 2012)*

People from all over Norway came here, put down their greetings, and stood together sharing the shock caused by the terror.

This article's aim is firstly to give a short overview of the messages which were placed in the public sphere of Oslo Cathedral Square<sup>1</sup> in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> By Oslo Cathedral Square we here mean the Square facing onto Kirkegaten, the area around Wexelsstatuen, Kirkeristen, and the Cathedral wall.

2011, and which consist of drawings with or without texts. Secondly it is to look further into two aspects of these messages: presentations of the Norwegian flag as a symbol of unity and solidarity, and presentations of love and roses as weapons. It is also an aim to try out theory of cultural memory<sup>2</sup> as an analytical tool when analysing the utterances.

## Research questions and theoretical perspectives

### The article's research question

This article is a part of the project *Critical Events, Values and National Self-Understanding* (the CVN project).<sup>3</sup> In this project my dataset consists of the part of the memorial messages which in the period from July 22<sup>nd</sup> to August 18<sup>th</sup> were placed on the Cathedral Square and which consist of drawings with and without texts. So far Bakke and I have consulted 1834 utterances. That represents about 15% of the total amount of the 12 019 utterances (texts, drawings and multimodal messages consisting of texts and drawings) which were placed on the Oslo Cathedral Square in this period. For this article we specifically ask *if central values which people were in dialogue with in these utterances may be seen as a part of Norwegian cultural memory, and if so, how*.

We want to emphasise that the huge amount of texts and drawings which were made public in Oslo were collected, were preserved and digitalised by the National Archives of Norway. They have done an impressive job. A part of the material has been published on the Archives' website, but the CVN project has been allowed access to the whole database under certain conditions.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Professor Dr. Elisabet Haakedal at Agder University, Norway, who made me aware of the possibilities inherent in this theoretical perspective and discussed it with me.

<sup>3</sup> a) In the CMV-project four senior researchers explore popular responses to a critical event, the dynamics at work in construction of national identity and the position of key values in such a process. The four are: Professor Dr. Sidsel Lied, Hedmark University College, Norway and Karlstad University, Sweden (project leader); Senior Lecturer Dr. Kerstin von Brömssen, Karlstad University and University of Gothenburg, Sweden; Associate Professor Dr. Hans Lödén, Karlstad University, Sweden; Professor Dr. Sturla Sagberg, Queen Maud University College, Trondheim, Norway. MA Sidsel Undseth Bakke, lecturer at Trysil upper secondary school and former PPU-student at Hedmark University College, is doing some work as Lied's research assistant. The CVN-project asks: What do the texts and drawings placed on Oslo Cathedral Square, at Youngstorget and in Utvika in the immediate aftermath of the terror attacks of 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2011 say about understanding of Norwegian national identity? (Lödén). What does this material tell us about what values people were in dialogue with when encountering this critical event? (Lied). How are values of hope and altruism reflected in the material, if at all? (Sagberg). How are students' talk and reflections on the event and the ideology of Breivik articulated three years later? (von Brömssen).

b) This present article is written by Lied. She is the article's "I". But Bakke has participated greatly in reading, exploring and categorising the material. She is therefore noted as co-author and a part of the article's "we".

## Central concepts and theoretical perspectives

We use the concept *dialogue* in line with Thomas Luckmann and Mikhail Bakhtin as any interaction through language or other symbolic means, including written or oral dialogue, inner dialogue, spoken, silent or vague dialogue, dialogue expressed through action or signs, accepting or critical dialogue, and dialogical relations between utterances of different kinds. The core of the Bakhtinian dialogue is to highlight diversity, and the thought that the individual is in continuous dialogue with his/her social and cultural communities in every process of meaning-making he/she is involved in, as well as the will to live with contradictions (Bakhtin, 1979/1986, 1981/1998; Dysthe, 2001a, 2001b; Lied, 2004, 2005; Luckmann, 1990). In line with this understanding of the concept of dialogue one may talk about a writer's dialogue with him- or herself, with other people, with a certain speech genre, with earlier utterances in a particular sphere of communication, with specific actions, with different values etc.

By *critical events* we primarily refer to events which are “uniquely unanticipated, perceived as random and shocking by observers” (Lödén, 2012), experienced by large audiences in real time and characterised by being *weakly scripted*: when the event occurs, people have little or no access to proven scripts that can tell them how to act. This situation invite people to interact, reflect on who they are, what they think of others, and how to relate to others (Filipp, 2001; Lödén, 2005). The terror attacks of July 22<sup>nd</sup> may be seen as a critical event which was unexpected and weakly scripted and called for a guiding script for how to act. But this critical event was not totally unscripted. The public and spontaneous reactions partly follow patterns known from events as the Oklahoma City bombing 1995 and September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 (Grider, 2001; Linenthal, 2001; McCarthy, 2007). In this article we ask if the public reactions and the values actualised by this critical event may be seen as a part of Norwegian cultural memory (Assmann, 2008; Connerton, 1989; A. Eriksen, 1995; Halbwachs & Coser, 1992).

We use Paul Connerton's and Aleida Assmann's perspectives concerning theory of *cultural memory* as an analytical tool helping us to interpret the messages. The study of cultural memory – pioneered by Maurice Halbwachs (Connerton, 1989, 2009; Halbwachs, 1935, 1941, 1950; Marksches, Wolf, & Schüler, 2010) – concerns the ways in which a society uses the past to make sense of and orient in the present. Every society understands itself and its context in the light of earlier experiences that have acquired the status of a cultural memory. A society's narratives about important historical events are often connected to some core symbols and functions as a thematisation of cultural values (A. Eriksen, 1995). *Connerton* states that to be able to understand what is happening to us, we base our experiences on a prior context. Prior to any single experience there exist frames of understanding, and to perceive a thing or an event is to place it inside expected and already experienced frames:

*[...] we identify a particular action by recalling at least two types of context for that action. We situate the agents' behaviour with reference to its place in their life history; and we situate that behaviour also with reference to its*

*place in the history of the social settings to which they belong. The narrative of one life is part of an interconnecting set of narratives; it is embedded in the story of those groups from which individuals derive their identity (Connerton, 1989, p. 21; see also Halbwachs & Coser, 1992).*

In other words: how we interpret an event or a situation “depends crucially” upon what social group we belong to (Connerton, 1989, p. 20).<sup>4</sup> In line with this frame of thought we ask if Norwegian stories about the war may be seen as *one* – among other – interconnecting sets of narratives in light of which critical events like July 22<sup>nd</sup> may be interpreted.

Assmann underlines that “humans who live within a cultural framework do not have to start anew in every generation but can make use of the knowledge of previous generations.” They can plug into “the external storage system of cultural memory” (Assmann, 2008, p. 272). She also points at the importance of cultural memory when it comes to the “lasting and normative value of exceptional events in the past” (p. 272). The central aim of cultural memory, she says, is to create links to this normative past (p. 273). Assmann also emphasises the complexity of cultural memory. Memory is characterised by “a perpetual interaction between remembering and forgetting” (p. 274). In order to remember some things, one has to forget other things, “but what is forgotten need not necessarily be lost forever” (p. 276), since remembering has an active as well as a passive side. She calls the active part of remembering *canon*. It functions as a working memory and refers to the number of “normative and formative texts, places, persons, artefacts, and myths” which are in active use in a society and are “circulated and communicated in ever new presentations and performances” (p. 276). The passive part of remembering she calls *archive*. The archive functions as a reference memory and offers the possibility of retrieving stored cultural goods. It is “a kind of ‘lost and found’-office for what is no longer needed or immediately understood” (Assmann, 2008, p. 276) but found interesting or important enough not to be totally forgotten. The archive “furnishes us with the possibility of comparison and reflection” (p. 276). Material in the archive needs to be brought back to the realm of the present to have its potential actualised (p. 280), for example through acts of interpretation or reinterpretation. In other words: we ask if the terror attacks of July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 may be seen in the light of theory of cultural memory – as a critical event which was unexpected and weakly scripted in Norwegian society, which therefore called for guiding scripts for how to act, and which thereby activated already experienced and proven frames of action from the past that provoked acts of re-interpretation in the present.

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<sup>4</sup> According to Eriksen there is a great collective concurrence between the stories about the War from academic historians and “ordinary people.” There is, though, a clear dissidence to this collective story telling: the Nazis have their own version of this story (A. Eriksen, 1995).

## The messages: texts and drawings from Oslo Cathedral Square

### A short overview of the messages: values expressed

The utterances from Oslo Cathedral Square form a diverse research material. Hearts, roses and other flowers, love quotes of different kinds, angels, and expressions of sorrow, unity and solidarity constitute the major part of the expressions from this public sphere. But there are also expressions of anger, reproofs of the terrorist, cries for retaliation, expressions of hatred and claims for death for the terrorist, articulated both through verbal utterances and drawings.

The most frequently expressed values in the 1834 messages that we have studied, were *love* (962 utterances/52%) and *unity and solidarity* (698 utterances/37%). To the value *love* we have, when categorising the messages, related all types of verbal expressions of love as well as drawings of hearts, hugs etc. To the value *unity and solidarity* we have related verbal expressions of support to and fellowship with individuals, the victims, their families, and with Norway, as well as drawings of people holding hands, rainbows – a frequently used sign of unity in diversity – and Norwegian flags. But *sorrow* is also an important component of the utterances, and in a great deal of them it permeates the ways in which different values are expressed. *Love* and *unity and solidarity* permeated by sorrow seem, that is, to be the values that the writers of the utterances were in most intense dialogue with. In dialogue with these values two of the 1834 writers even included the perpetrator's relatives and friends in the Norwegian fellowship of unity and solidarity, hearts and roses.

The following two utterances may serve as examples of this unity of *sorrow*, *love* and *unity and solidarity*:



FIG. 2

In fig. 2 “Love”<sup>5</sup> may be seen as the headline of the utterance. The phrase “We must stand together!”<sup>6</sup> is placed on the right hand side, beneath the candle and to the right of the angel who holds a rose in her hand. According to Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen the upper part of a composition often represents the composition's

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<sup>5</sup> Kjærlighet

<sup>6</sup> Vi må stå sammen!

generalised essence of information and also its most salient part. It is the foregrounded part of the message (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 186-188). The composition's left hand side presents "the given", that which is expected that the reader is assumed to know already, as part of the culture, while the right hand side contains the "new" or not yet known, the key information or the composition's message (pp. 179-181). Following this line of thinking *love* is the generalised essence or the theme of this utterance, while *unity and solidarity* is the new, the utterance's main message. This utterance, that is, suggests a writer who is in dialogue with the values *love* and *unity and solidarity* when expressing his or her reactions to the terror attack.

The Angel is the main character in this utterance. Angels are traditionally connected with God or heaven or the afterlife, in religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism as well as in new age movements and alternative spirituality. This angel has a rose in her hand. Roses are often considered the flower of love and deep feelings, including sorrow. In addition, the rose is also a symbol for the Labour party and has been their logo since 1978 (NTB, 2011). It was the Labour Party's youth camp that was attacked on Utøya island and it was young social democrats who were killed there. This may suggest that it is against the background of *sorrow* in the face of the death of the 69 youths that the writer of this utterance highlights *love* and *unity and solidarity*.

In fig. 3 we also see how sorrow permeates these values:



FIG. 3

The text at the top says: "All of Norway cries".<sup>7</sup> The small circle over the letter *å* is drawn as a tear to underline this message. The text at the bottom says: "OSLOVE". Here the O is drawn as a heart-shaped Norwegian flag. The same figure we find in the centre of the drawing. That is: both the texts and the drawings symbolise all of Norway crying – enclosed in love.

However, in different ways our material also revealed a spirit of resistance to and confrontation with the terrorist's actions. Some utterances adopted the language of war when expressing their opposition: they introduced both love and roses as weapons against this kind of evil. Others scorned or laughed at Breivik:

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<sup>7</sup> Hele Norge gråter





FIG. 4

Here the 10 year old writer starts with a text addressing the victims and their parents: “Dear parents and children. It is unfair. We are best on peace here in Norway. LOVE NN 10 years of age.”<sup>8</sup> Then he continues on the next page with a cartoon showing “Anders” singing and laughing on his way to Utøya where he shoots people. The police arrive, and “Anders” surrenders. He is put in jail where he, lying on the bed, states: “Yes! I made it”<sup>9</sup> – and laughs. The cartoon is placed on the left hand side of the page, according to Kress and van Leeuwen signalling what the writer probably considers as known. On the right hand side, signalling the composition’s message, the cartoon maker scolds “Anders” as a parent rebuking his child: “You are naughty Anders!”<sup>10</sup> The course of action in this cartoon leaves little doubt that “Anders” here is Anders Behring Breivik.

Some utterances mock the terrorist more than rebuking him. Fig. 5 may serve as an example of this. On the first page’s upper part, the part which according to Kress & van Leeuwen presents the composition’s generalised essence of information, we see the terrorist behind a barred window while the people of Oslo are outside, laughing:



FIG. 5

Bakhtin presents laughter as a tool with which to inactivate the dangerous and protect oneself against what is regarded as threatening. Laughter is the people’s weapon against a superior force: “One plays with the frightening and laughs at it. The

<sup>8</sup> Kjære foreldre og barn. Det er urettferdig. Vi er best på fred her i Norge.

<sup>9</sup> Yes! Jeg greide det.

<sup>10</sup> Du er slem Anders!

frightening is reduced to a scarecrow”(Bakhtin, 2003, pp. 69, SL's translation from Norwegian). But according to Bakhtin, laughter is also a way in which to distance oneself from the present and make it history, not allowing it to be a part of the future. In other words: by laughing at Breivik, the writer neutralises him, places him in the past, and excludes him from influencing the future.

Two of the 1834 utterances that we have consulted so far, say that they want Breivik dead. Fig. 6 shows one of them. The main actor in this utterance is a man holding a poster. It says: “Brevik must die”.



FIG. 6

As this short overview of our material suggests, there are several interesting aspects present in the messages which ought to be studied and discussed further. In this article, however, we will elaborate on two themes only: the use of the Norwegian flag as a symbol of unity and solidarity, and the presentation of love and roses as weapons. To better understand these two examples, we will elaborate on them in the light of theory of collective memory.

### **Elaboration 1: Presentations of the Norwegian flag as a symbol of unity and solidarity**

In some countries the flag is considered a symbol of excluding nationalism. This is not the main trend in Norway. Norway may be characterised as a country full of flags. In some places people flag all the time – on red-letter days and anniversaries as well as on “Sundays with nice weather” (T. H. Eriksen, 1998, p. 3). The flag is, by tradition, considered a sign of unity and freedom. This may be interpreted in the light of the struggle for a separate Norwegian flag after the centuries long unions with Denmark and with Sweden respectively. After 1814, when Norway got a constitution of its own, the demand for a separate Norwegian flag – a “pure” Norwegian flag without any elements of other nations’ flags – grew, and the fight for a flag became a part of the fight for independence. In connection with the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905, the fight ended and Norway got a flag of its own (Kongshavn, 2004, p. 5). During the Second World War, the German occupants set restrictions on the use of the flag, Independence Day parades etc. This was one of the measures that was taken by the occupying force to prevent manifestations of resistance and “misuse” (p.6) of patriotic symbols. Thus one may say that the Norwegian flag once again

became a symbol of the fight for freedom and independence. The then Crown Prince Olav's radio speech on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945 may support such an interpretation. He ended his speech by linking the unity during the war with the fight for the Norwegian flag and for freedom: "We have faithfully kept together during five long and difficult years. We have each on our border fought for the aim that we are facing today – to hoist our free Norwegian flag as free women and men" (Ruge, 1948, p. 537, Lied's translation from Norwegian).

The flag has continued to be a symbol of unity and freedom in the official Norway after the war, too. The 17<sup>th</sup> of May, Norway's national holiday and an official flag-flying day, where the Norwegian flag is seen "everywhere" – in the hands of children as well as on "all of" Norway's flagpoles – may be interpreted as an indicator of this: it has been celebrated with children's 17<sup>th</sup>-of-May-parades and flags all over the country since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



FIG. 7

After the terror attacks of July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 this lasting understanding of the flag as a symbol of unity and solidarity became even more apparent, when many participants on social media changed their profile pictures and replaced them with Norwegian flags and OSLO written with hearts. The following picture from Sue Thet Moon's article from July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011 shows this:



FIG. 8

(retrieved from *Su Thet Mon*, 2011)

Some also expressed that this is not the time to try to “score cheap points concerning immigration etc.” but rather “a time for unity and solidarity, not hatred and fear” (Su Thet Mon, 2011, p. 5). This combination of flags and/or hearts and/or other expressions of unity and solidarity is a frequent feature in our material, too, as the following three utterances display:



FIG. 9

Under the rainbow and a sky filled with multi-coloured hearts together with a Norwegian flag, two girls are holding hands. The one with the brown hair says: “We stick together here in Oslo”,<sup>11</sup> and the fair-haired one answers: “Yes, we stick together in Oslo”.<sup>12</sup> The value *unity and solidarity* is here represented by the content of the verbal texts which explicitly highlight togetherness, by the holding of hands, the Norwegian flag, and the rainbow which is a traditional symbol of unity in diversity. The value *love* is represented by the hearts.

It is noteworthy that the hearts are multi-coloured and placed just above the rainbow. It is possible to see this as a mere play with colours. But it is also possible to interpret the multi-coloured hearts as a combination of love and unity in diversity. Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that the image of “children of the rainbow” is a current and well known symbol of unity in diversity in Norway. Lillebjørn Nilsen’s song “Barn av regnbuen” (Children of the rainbow) has been frequently used in Norwegian schools since its release in 1973, and it is therefore likely to assume that the song is known by most Norwegian schoolchildren. This song was also sung in all Norwegian towns on one of the days during the trial against Behring Breivik in 2012 as a joint protest to his message that this song is a threat in that it brainwashes Norwegian schoolchildren and is propaganda for a multicultural society because of its message of unity this cultural diversity. Thus, the notion of unity and a sky with a colourful rainbow was a current and well known symbol-combination in Norway before July 22<sup>nd</sup>. 61 of the messages we have studied include rainbows, often together with other symbols of love and unity such as hearts, roses, Norwegian

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<sup>11</sup> Vi holder sammen her i Oslo

<sup>12</sup> Ja vi holder sammen i Oslo



flags and verbal expressions of unity, as in fig. 10 where the verbal text says “Let us live in unity and solidarity and in love”.<sup>13</sup>



FIG. 10

Against this background I find it possible to interpret the value *unity and solidarity* in fig 9 as represented not only by the content of the verbal texts, the holding of hands, the Norwegian flag, and the rainbow, but also by the sky with a blend of multi-coloured hearts. The young artist, that is, was in dialogue with the values *love*, *diversity* and *unity and solidarity* when making this utterance.



FIG. 11

In fig. 11 the pronounced elements are flags, a heart and one light- and one dark-brown hand. They form different reliefs: a Norwegian flag constitutes the background for the two hands, and in their turn the two diverse hands constitute the background for the heart-shaped flag. Theory of relief in utterances suggests that the writer's main argument functions as the foreground in argumentative utterances, while values and attitudes that give perspective to and explain what relevance the writer's arguments and message have, function as the background part (Evensen, 1991, 2002; Evensen & Vagle, 2003; Lied, 2004, 2006; Ongstad, 2002). Following this way of reasoning, the *unity and solidarity* of the Norwegian flag in this utterance gives background and perspective to the *diversity* which the two hands indicate, while the *diversity* specified by the two hands gives background and perspective to the *love* and the *unity and solidarity* signalled by the heart-shaped Norwegian flag. Thus love, unity and

<sup>13</sup> La oss leve i samhold og skjørlighet

solidarity, and diversity are values which here are intertwined and interdependent. They define each other and give perspective to each other.

The last utterance which we will present here, fig. 12, has one main element: a crying or bleeding Norwegian flag at half-mast:

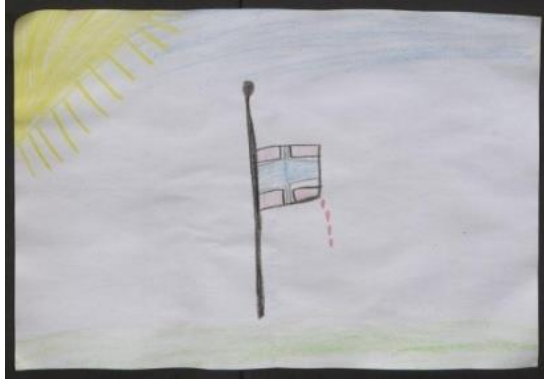


FIG. 12

Red drops are falling from it. Are they tears or blood or blood-filled tears? A flag in this position as well as tears are, in a Norwegian context, signs of mourning. But as the flag is considered a sign of unity, collective sorrow may be seen as the focus of this utterance, too. The artist here is thus in dialogue with the value of *unity and solidarity* permeated by sorrow.

The terror attacks of July 22<sup>nd</sup> may be seen as a critical event taking place in Norwegian society: it was perceived by observers as unexpected and shocking, and it was weakly scripted. But it was not totally unscripted. One example of this comes forth in Sue Thet Mon's article from July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011. In her article she shows that the use of the Norwegian flag as a symbol of unity and solidarity started immediately after the terror attacks and was instantly understood and reproduced by participants on social media. And as we have tried to show so far in this article, it was also a frequently occurring symbol of these values in messages from Oslo Cathedral Square. These examples may indicate that the flag is a symbol in active use in Norway and, as such, easy to apply when reactions to the terror attacks of July 22<sup>nd</sup> were to be communicated and circulated.

We have suggested that the flag has been a symbol of resistance to oppression, of fighting for freedom and of unity and solidarity at several critical phases in Norwegian history, and has continued as a prominent symbol of unity and solidarity right up to the present. Against this background we also suggest that this use of the flag may be understood in line with Assmann's thinking of remembrance: People living in Norway made use of the knowledge of previous generations and did not have to start anew when expressing their thoughts in opposition to the terrorist's actions. They could "plug into" one part of the "storage system of cultural memory" and thus create links to the normative past as well as to the present: the use of the flag has been and still is an active part of Norwegian remembrance. It is in active use and is "circulated and communicated in ever new presentations and performances". As such, it may be understood as a part of *canon* – and therefore easy to circulate and communicate "in

ever new presentations and performances” (Assmann, 2008, p. 276). Fig. 11 is one clear example of such reinterpretation. In this utterance the concept of Norwegian unity is re-actualised and further defined through an act of interpretation: unity is characterised by diversity; dark brown as well as light brown hands are needed to define Norwegian unity and solidarity.

This interpretation of the Norwegian flag as a symbol of diversity, unity and solidarity does not exclude that certain groups of Norwegians may use the flag as a symbol of exclusionary nationalism and promote “Norway for white Norwegians”. But this is a thinking that has a rather weak representation in the messages that we have studied. This does not mean, however, that it is totally absent. Some utterances may imply that the writers have met this kind of thinking. We shall return to this in our concluding reflections at the end of the article. But before that, we shall elaborate on our other theme, namely roses and love presented as weapons.

## Elaboration 2: Presentations of love and roses as weapons

Some utterances adopt the language of war in their struggle to understand and create meaning in the meaningless situation of loss and terror that Breivik’s actions caused:

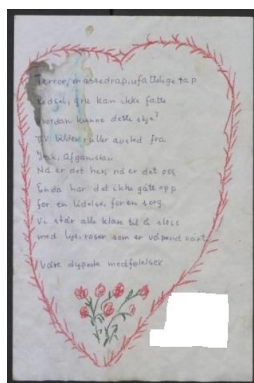


FIG. 13

FIG. 14

FIG. 15

The first of these three utterances, fig. 13, plainly states that “Love is our weapon...”<sup>14</sup> The text is placed inside a heart with 90 small red, white and pink hearts forming the heart’s outer border. The value *love* is here represented by the word “love” as well as by 91 hearts. In the second utterance, fig. 14, the need for weapons in the fight for understanding and meaning is explicitly stated: “Terror, mass killings, inconceivable loss. Fear, horror that you cannot comprehend. How could this happen? TV pictures keep rolling in from Irak, Afganistan. Now it is here, now it is us. Yet we don’t understand the suffering, the sorrow. We are all ready to fight with candles, roses that is our weapon. Our deepest compassion”<sup>15</sup> Underneath the text the writers

<sup>14</sup> Kjærlighet er vårt våpen

<sup>15</sup> Terror, massedrap, ufattelige tap/Redsel, gru kan ikke fatte/Hvordan kunne dette skje?/TV bilder ruller av sted fra/Irak, Afganistan/Nå er det her, nå er det oss/Enda har det ikke gått

have drawn roses. The text and the roses are placed inside a heart. And fig. 15 explicitly says that suitable weapons in the fight against terror, are flowers: “To all who have passed away! Flowers against terror.”<sup>16</sup>

Love/roses/flowers and weapons are usually seen as opposite or conflicting categories. But sometimes these categories blend, for instance in Mahatma Ghandi’s doctrine of non violence and in the story about Harry Potter where love is presented as *the* weapon in the defence against evil – and here in fig. 13-15. By piecing these opposites together, as is done here, the writers create a room for a fight which is not violent. “We won’t give in! We’ll fight back! But we’ll do it our way and choose our own weapons!” are messages that one may read into these texts. These messages may also be interpreted as being in dialogue with Prime Minister Stoltenberg’s message: the way in which to fight the critical event that the nation faced on July 22<sup>nd</sup> is by standing firm in defending our values, and responding with “even more democracy. Even more humanity. But never naivety” (Stoltenberg, 2011b), holding forth that the guilty would be held responsible, and drawing attention to “dignity, compassion and resolve” (Stoltenberg, 2011a). They may also be in dialogue with Crown Prince Haakon’s memorandum that “We have chosen to respond to cruelty with closeness. We have chosen to meet hatred with unity. We have chosen to show what we stand for” (Haakon, 2011, my translation).

But we ask if this kind of response may have even deeper roots, too. Stoltenberg characterised the critical event of July 22<sup>nd</sup> as the worst atrocity Norway has seen since the Second World War (Stoltenberg, 2011a). And one may ask: is it possible that there may exist already experienced frameworks of reaction (Connerton, 1989), proven scripts or “a storage system of cultural memory” from the Second World War in Norway which official Norway and the Norwegian people could “plug into” (Assmann, 2008) and give suggestions for how to act in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup>? In this connection we want to draw attention to two such possible scripts. The first concerns reactions from the church in spring 1942. The Norwegian church fell out with the Nazi authorities early in the War and protested inter alia against the Hird’s violent actions and the persecution of Jews. The climax in the Church’s fight was in spring 1942. On February 26<sup>th</sup> the Oslo bishop Eivind Berggrav – who was considered the leader of the Church’s resistance movement – was dismissed from his position by the Nazis (Austad, 2005). On Good Friday April 3<sup>rd</sup> a thousand people went to Oslo Cathedral to attend the service led by Berggrav. But as the bishop was dismissed and also arrested, there was no service. In protest, people stayed on the Cathedral Square singing the Norwegian national hymn and the national anthem. The Hird and the police tried to disperse the crowd, but in vain (Arkivverket). In other words: people protested against the abuse and the oppression by singing together. Following king Haakon VII in his speeches after the War, the way in which church and school

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opp/for en lidelse, for en sorg/Vi står alle klare til å sloss/med lys, roser som er våpenet vårt./  
Våre dypeste medfølelser.

<sup>16</sup> Til alle som er borte! Blomster mot terror.



challenged the German oppression made an impression beyond Norway's borders (Sommerfeldt, 1947).

The second factor which we want to draw attention to is messages from the management group of the Norwegian Underground Resistance Movement and The Defence Command in spring 1945. The War in Norway ended in May 1945. A pamphlet which the management group of the Underground Resistance Movement wrote to their members in April 1945, ended like this: "The parole is: Dignity – Calmness – Discipline" (Hjemmefrontens ledelse, 1945, SL's translation). And on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945 the illegal newspaper *The Chronicle* (*Kronikken*) published the article "The days ahead" ("Dagene som kommer") by The Defence Command (Forsvarets Overkommando) saying:

*[...] It is completely new that the nations, while the war still rages, is mobilising the best of forces to work for peace and a safe future. [...] the war has not killed the people's wish for and belief that we win the most and the furthest by means of peaceful pursuits. [...] The hatred against the oppressors, the memory of all the innocent lives they have taken, may certainly tempt us to retaliate. But we don't help the many who have lost their lives in the fight for the country's future life, by fighting when the battle is over. It is more in keeping with our traditions that punishment takes place through law and order. We serve our country best and honour our fallen comrades highest by [...] building the country again, and, if possible, make it richer and brighter for everyone [...]* (Forsvarets Overkommando, 1945, SL's translation).<sup>17</sup>

The concept "during the war" still has a very special significance with many Norwegians. Few are in doubt about the war in question: it is the Second World War and the Norwegian part of it, from April 9<sup>th</sup> 1940 to May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945. These five years have, according to Anne Eriksen, great symbolic relevance. Experiences and events from these years are constantly remembered and are still relevant in Norwegian identity formation (A. Eriksen, 1995), as the following message from an 8-year-old child implies: "It is good that so many show their concern for all the sad things that have happened. Nothing as bad as this has happened since the war. I think of you and of all the bad things that happened last Friday. Greetings from NN, 8 years."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Thanks to associate professor Inger Haug at Hedmark University College who shared with us her fathers' scrap-book from the Second World War and made us aware of the pamphlet as well as the journal from spring 1945 that we have referred to here.

<sup>18</sup> Det er veldig bra at så mange viser omsorg for alt det triste som har skjedd. Det har ikke skjedd noe så ille siden krigen. Jeg tenker på dere og på alt det vonne som skjedde på forie fredag. Hilsen NN på 8 år.

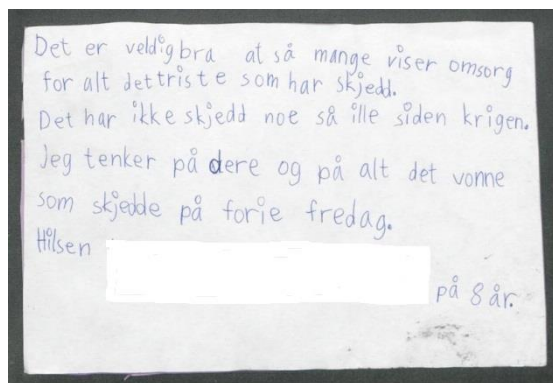


FIG. 16

In the two examples above from the War we see that the response to abuse, oppression, and the possible threat from a beaten enemy who is still in the country, is non-violence in the form of singing, peaceful demonstration, dignity, calmness, and justice. This was also the response from the official Norway in the immediate hours after the terror attacks of July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Were the Norwegian government in dialogue with these and similar messages from 1945 when trying to find a proven script for how to react and what value-messages to send to the Norwegian people in the immediate hours after the critical event of July 22<sup>nd</sup>? We don't suggest that scripts from the Second World War were the only scripts available for official Norway and the Norwegian people in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, but we ask if they may serve as possible scripts, present in Norway's own history and a part of society's collective memory.

The critical event like the one taking place on Utøya and in central Oslo in 2011, was in a Norwegian context a weakly scripted situation "with significance beyond the immediate context" (Lödén, 2005, p. 11, SL's translation). But here we suggest that proven scripts were not entirely absent, asking if the example from Oslo Cathedral Square in 1942 and the appeal from the Norwegian Defence Command to the Norwegian Underground Resistance Movement in 1945 may serve as examples of such scripts. When discussing the use of Norwegian flags in the utterances from Oslo Cathedral Square we have suggested – in line with Assmann's thinking – that the use of flags in the utterances from Oslo Cathedral Square following July 22<sup>nd</sup> may be seen as an active part of Norwegian remembrance, and more precisely: a part of *canon*. This is not so with the use of roses, flowers and love as weapons. As Stoltenberg emphasised, July 22<sup>nd</sup> was the worst atrocity Norway has seen since the Second World War. It was a critical event which was "uniquely unanticipated, perceived as random and shocking by observers" (Lödén, 2005, 2012) and not immediately understood (Assmann, 2008). But the bringing of the Second World War onto the scene, as Stoltenberg did, created a possibility to compare and reflect on what the war – as an "exceptional event in the past" (ibid.) in Norway's own history – might give of assistance when trying to make sense of and orient in the face of the present terror. Following Assmann, we ask if the War and the non-violent reactions in February 1942 and April 1945 may be seen as *a part of* the passive part of Norwegian cultural

memory – the *archive* – where cultural goods that are no longer needed but found interesting and important enough not to be forgotten, are stored. We also ask if the values from the two situations mentioned above and other situations, texts and artefacts from the War and the immediate post-war period, consciously or unconsciously may have been brought back into the realm of the present by the critical event of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, may have provoked acts of re-interpretation, and may have given proven frames of action *both* with Stoltenberg and his advisers *and* with the Norwegian people. Stoltenberg's value-messages were listened to by the Norwegian people: people reacted to the terror by participating in rose parades and commemoration gatherings, by singing "Children of the rainbow", by placing roses, candles, drawings, texts, teddy bears, footballs, and other forms of greetings at central places in towns and villages all over Norway. But the question is if the response to his messages would have been so undisputed if the values to which he appealed, were not latent in Norwegian cultural memory *as values that were to be used when facing and trying to make sense of critical or exeptional events* – like a war or unexpected and shocking terror attacks such as the one of July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## Concluding reflections

Initially in this article we asked if central values which people were in dialogue with in the messages from Oslo Cathedral Square in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011, may be seen as a part of Norwegian cultural memory, and if so, how. We have answered in the affirmative on this question, by elaborating on presentations of the Norwegian flag as a symbol of the value of unity and solidarity, and on presentations of love and roses as weapons promoting the values of love, humanity and calmness. In our discussion we have drawn on theory of cultural memory and suggested that the use of the Norwegian flag in the messages may be understood in the frame of Assmann's term *canon*, representing the active part of cultural remembrance, and that the message from the use of roses and hearts may be understood in the frame of the term *archive*, representing the passive part of remembrance.

The values which were brought into focus here may be seen in a wider context than being individual writers' dialogue partners in the face of a critical event. To further support this assertion, we will turn to the preamble for the guidelines for the Norwegian state's educational system. The idea of a comprehensive national school where education is free for all and with a common, compulsory content, is one of the main principles of this system today. This principle has led to common guidelines and curricula for the state school system all over Norway. Through these curricula, knowledge which society finds so important that all its inhabitants should know it is imparted. The preamble for this system sets a value-based platform for education and teaching in Norwegian schools ("Education Act Norway ", 2010; Stubø, 2012). Respect for human dignity, equality and solidarity are among the values listed here. These values are, that is, among the values that Norwegian authorities want to be central in Norwegian society. These were also values which our material brought into

focus. In other words: values which were central in the utterances from Oslo Cathedral Square in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 are in line with central values in Norwegian society, values which are in active use in Norwegian society and are “circulated and communicated in ever new presentations and performances” (Assmann, 2008, p. 276). As such they are a part of what Assmann calls *canon*.

But in the same way as the reactions after the war were not always in line with the principles that we like to think is prominent in Norway, human dignity, unity and solidarity do not permeate all of our society. Fig. 17 highlights this. It says: “To everybody in the whole world. Hi. I very sorry for what happened downtown Oslo and in Utøya. He who did it does not like Muslim. But I am Muslim and I am normal. We are nice. Bye!”<sup>19</sup>

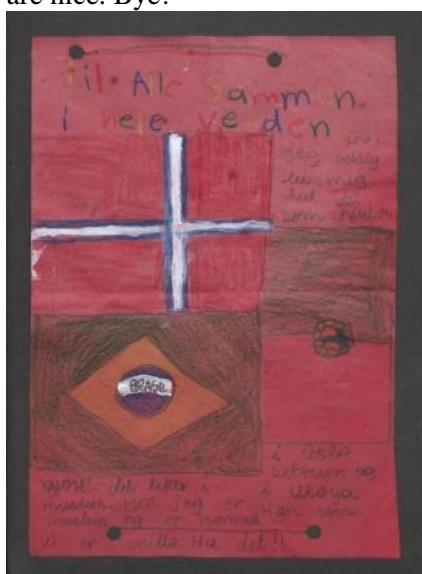


FIG. 17

We find it thought-provoking that a child or a young person living in Norway in the aftermath of July 22<sup>nd</sup> found it necessary to write to the whole world that he/she, as a Muslim, is normal and nice.

This utterance is noteworthy. It tells us inter alia not to generalise: Even though there are Muslim extremists, not all Muslims are. Even though Breivik is a terrorist, not all Norwegian Christians are. And even though humanity and love, unity and solidarity are important values in Norwegian school and society, these values still need to be highlighted, reactivated and reinterpreted – in school as well as in other parts of society.

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<sup>19</sup> Til Alle sammen i hele verden. Hei. Jeg veldig lei meg med det som skjedde i Oslo setrum og i Utøya. Han som gjore det liker ikke muslim. Men jeg er muslim og er normal. Vi er snille. Ha det!!

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